

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ingrid Wells

PHONE: 443-984-2623

Ingrid.wells@baltimorecity.gov

Health Alert: Contact Lens Users Should Beware Fungal Infections

BALTIMORE, MD (April 13, 2006) - The Baltimore City Health Department is calling on all users of soft contact lenses in the city to take extra precautions to avoid vision-threatening fungal infections.

On April 10, 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that it is investigating 109 U.S. cases of suspected *Fusarium* keratitis, a severe fungal infection of the outer surface of the eye.

Of thirty cases fully investigated so far, 28 people reported using soft contact lenses. Of these, 26 people recalled the brand name of their contact lens solution. All 26 reported using a ReNu brand lens cleaning solution manufactured by Bausch and Lomb, or a generic brand solution manufactured by Bausch and Lomb, during the month before infection onset. Of these 26 people, 21 recalled exclusively using ReNu brand solution. Eight of the patients required corneal transplantation to save their vision.

Because of these findings, Bausch and Lomb has suspended shipments of one brand of contact lens solution, ReNu with MoistureLoc. Several pharmacy chains have removed all or some ReNu brands from the shelves. In February 2006, Bausch & Lomb suspended sales of ReNu with MoistureLoc in Singapore and Hong Kong because of concerns about a potential link to fungal infections.

“This pattern of vision-threatening infections is very concerning,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “I recommend that all soft contact lens users be especially diligent about lens safety. A prudent course of action would be to avoid ReNu brand lens solutions manufactured by Bausch & Lomb until this investigation is completed and more information is available.”

The following are potential symptoms of *Fusarium* infection:

- Eye pain
- Decrease in vision; blurring of vision
- Light hypersensitivity

- Eye redness
- Eye discharge

If any of these symptoms are present, users should stop using their lenses and immediately seek medical attention.

Clinicians who evaluate patients with microbial keratitis should consider that a fungal infection may be involved and refer the patient to an ophthalmologist, if appropriate to obtain a specimen for laboratory analysis. Cases of *Fusarium* keratitis should be reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at 1-800-638-2041, select #4 for device specialist. Cases should also be reported to the Baltimore City Health Department at 410-396-4436.

In addition, FDA and CDC are advising consumers to take precautions to prevent contamination of the soft lenses and the products used to maintain them, including:

- Wash hands with soap and water, and dry (lint-free method) before handling lenses.
- Wear and replace lenses according to the schedule prescribed by the doctor.
- Follow the specific lens cleaning and storage guidelines from the doctor and the solution manufacturer.
- Keep the contact lens case clean and replace every 3-6 months.
- Remove the lenses and consult your doctor immediately if you experience symptoms such as redness, pain, tearing, increased light sensitivity, blurry vision, discharge or swelling.
- In addition, regardless of which cleaning/disinfecting solution used, wearers may want to consider performing a "rub and rinse" lens cleaning method, rather than a no rub method, in order to minimize the number of germs and reduce the chances of infection.

Sources: FDA, *Investigation of Serious Eye Infections Associated With Soft Contact Lens Use and Contact Lens Solution*, FDA News (Apr. 10, 2006); CDC, *Fusarium Keratitis—Multiple States, 2006*, MMWR (Apr. 10, 2006).

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